

MUSEUM EXHIBITS

Over 300 aircraft and missiles, along with thousands of artifacts are on display at the United States Air Force Museum. These exhibits present the history of military aviation from the first pioneers and their daring adventures to aircraft development of today's jets and their evolution in design and engineering.

On display with the aircraft are military uniforms dating back to 1916 and personal mementos, such as diaries and medals. Other items of interest include an original Wright wind tunnel and a display devoted to Major Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band. A special section of the Museum pays tribute to celebrities in uniform, including Brigadier General Jimmy Stewart, Major Clark Gable, Flight Officer Jackie Coogan, Captain Ronald Reagan and Technical Sergeant Joe Louis.

In recent years, the Museum's Exhibits Division has launched into a period of renaissance in exhibit design. It isn't just a matter of erecting a case or a 3-D structure and artifacts anymore. The Exhibits Division staff creates time elements of history with the Museum aircraft collections.

Static aircraft are moving into the realm of dynamic exhibitry, testing human emotions and human sensory elements as visitors move through a historic venue.

Exhibit designers go to great lengths when it comes to the accuracy and detail of Museum exhibits. Hundreds of hours are spent in the archives researching the history of actual missions. Many displays are lighted with computerized theatrical lighting, allowing designers to create realistic illusions of time and places with a real sense of atmosphere.

Mannequins play an important part of the exhibit and have come a long way from stiff, fiberglass models. The new mannequins are made of foam and latex and have wire frames, allowing for more realistic poses. Some are even custom designed – down to surgically-implanted hair.

Many exhibits throughout the Museum include videos featuring specific accounts in history. Research and development for the video is accomplished in-house by audio-visual specialists.

Two examples of this creative exhibitry are the B-25B Mitchell, "Tokyo Raid," and "VE Day." Additional exhibits are currently under design and construction.

The B-25 exhibit depicts the accounts of those who served during the World War II "Tokyo Raid" mission. Resting on a simulated carrier deck, the B-25B comes to life with mannequins representing Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, members of the Doolittle Raiders and *USS Hornet* crewmembers. Nearly 5,000 hours went into building the new habitat, a testament to the complexity of the project.

The VE Day exhibit employs soldier mannequins and authentic Nazi artifacts lying amid rubble to symbolize the Allied triumph over the Nazi scourge in securing victory in Europe.

Through research and personal experiences, the staff continues to find exciting new mediums in exhibit design.